CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

Vol. 1.7 FOR JAN. 1816. [No. 3.

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To the improvement of the human mind:

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BY LUSCOMB KNAP.

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PITTSFORD: N. Y.

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DISSERTATIONS

ON THE

REVELATIONS.

CHAP. 1V.

- adoor was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard, was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.
- 2. And immediately 1 was in the spirit: and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.
- 3. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.
- 4. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.
- 5. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thundrings, and voices: And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.
- 6. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: And in the midst.

of the throne, and round about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

7. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

8. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him, and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

9. And when those beasts give glory and honour, and thanks to him that sat on the

throne who liveth for ever and ever,

10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne saying,

11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure

they are, and were created.

After this vision relating to the things which are, other visions succeed of the things which must be hereafter. The scene is laid in heaven; and the scenery is drawn in allusion to the incampment of the children of Israel in the wilderness. God is represented sitting on his throne, as in the tabernscle

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or temple, much in the same manner as the prophet Esekiel hath described him. Next to the tabernacle incamped the Priests and Levites ; & next to the throne were four and twenty elders sitting, answering to the princes of the four and twenty courses of the Jewish priests; clothed in white raiment, as emblems of their purity and sanctity; and they had on their heads crowns of gold, Christ having made them a royal priesthood, and kings and priests unto God. Out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thundrings, and voices, the usual concomitants and attendants of the divine presence? and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, answering to the golden candlestick with seven lamps, which was before the most holy place in the tabernacle. Before the throne there was also a sea of glass, like unto crystal, answering to the great molten sea or laver in the temple of Solomon: And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, that is before and behind the throne, and on each side of the throne, were four beasts or rather four living creatures, representing the heads of the whole congregation in the four quarters of the world, and resembling the Cherubim and Saraphim in Ezekiel's and Isaiah's visions, or rather resembling the four standards or ensigns of

the four divisions in the camp of Israel, according to the traditionary description of them by Jewish writers, The first living creature was like a lion, which was the standard of Judah with the two other tribes in the eastern division; and the second like a calf or ox, which was the standard of E. phraim with the two other tribes in the western division; and the third had a face as a man, which was the standard of Reuben with the two other tribes in the southern division; and the fourth was like a flying eagle, which was the standard of Dan with the two other tribes in the northern division: and this traditionary description agrees also with the four faces of the Cherub in Ezekiel's visions. Of these living creatures and of the elders the constant employment is to celebrate, in hymns of praise and thanksgiving, the great and wonderful works of creation and providence.

HISTORY OF EGYPT.

EGYPT is one of the first and most famous countries that we read of in history. In the Hebrew scriptures it is called Mizraim and the land of Ham, having been first inhabited after the deluge by Noah's youngest son Ham or Hammon, and by his son Mizriam.

It is certain, that in the days of Joseph, if not before those in the days of Abraham, it was a great and flourishing kingdom.—
There are monuments of its greatness yet remaining to the surprise and astonishment of all poterity, of which as we know not the time of their erection, so in all probability we shall never know the time of their destruction.

This country was also celebrated for its wisdom, no less than for its antiquity. was, as 1 may call it, the great academy of the earlier ages, Hither the wits and sages of Greece and other countries repaired, and imbibed their learning at this fountain. It is mentioned to the commendation of Mo. ses that he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians: and the highest character given of Solomon's wisdom is that it excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country and all the wisdom of Egypt. But with this wisdom, and this greatness, it was early corrupted; and was as much the parent of superstition, as it was the mistress of learning; and the one as well as the other were from thence propagated and diffused over other countries. It was indeed the grand corrupter of the world, the source of polytheism and idolatry to several of the eastern, and to most of the more western

nations; and degenerated at last to such monstrous and beastly worship, that we shall scarcely find a parallel in all history.

Prosperity of the Jews in Egypt.

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ALEXANDER the great transplanted many of the Jews into his new city of Alexandria, and allowed them privileges and immunities equal to those of the Macedonians themselves. Ptolemy Soter carried more of them into Egypt, who there enjoyed such advantages, that not a few of the other Jews went thither of their own accord, the goodness of the country and the liberality of Ptolemy alluring them. Ptolemy Philadel phus redeemed and released the captive Jews; and in his reign or his father's, the books of Moses were translated into Greek, and afterwards the other parts of the Old Testament. The third Ptolemy, called Euergetes, having subdued all Syria, did not sacrifice to the Gods of Egypt in acknowledgement of his victory; but coming to Jerusalem, made his oblations to God after the manner of the Jews; and the king's example, no doubt, would influence many of his subjects. The sixth Ptolemy, called Philometor, and his queen Cleopatra, committed the whole management of the kingdom to two Jews, Onias and Dositheus,

who were their chief ministers and generals, and had the principal direction of all affairs both civil and military. This Onias obtained a licence from the king and queen to build a temple for the Jews in Egypt like that at Jerusalem, alledging f r this purpose this ery prophecy of Isaiah, that there should be an altar to the Lord in the l n of Egypt: and the king and queen in the rescript make honorable mention of the law and the prophet Isaiah, and express a dread of sinning against God. The place chosen for the building of this temple, was in the prefecture of Heliopolis, or the city of the sun, which place is likewise mentioned in the prophecy. It was built after the model of the temple at Jerusalem, but not so sumptuous and magnificent. He himself was made high priest; other priests and Levites were appointed for the ministration; and divine servi e was daily performed there in the same manner as at Jerusalem, and continued as long; for Vaspasian, having destroyed the temple at Jerusalem, ordered this also to be demolished.

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NOTES ON THE PARABLES

OF THE

NEW-TESTAMENT.

Matth. CHAP viii. verses 31, 32.

Another parable put he forth unto them, saving, The king low of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree; so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

In this parable, Christ represents

1. The gospel of everlasting life, by one grain of mustard-seed; not on account of its smallness, or insignificancy, in itself considered; but on account of its small appearance when it was first revealed to man on earth, by a threat to the serpent, in which it was said, "The seed of the woman should bruise his head:" and as Jesus saith, "I and my doctrine am one," we may even appropriate the grain of mustard seed to Christ himself who is the seed of the woman promised.

2. Mankind, or human nature, by a field, in which the multard-feed is fown; in which, this parable cor-

responds with the former.

3. The Father of all mercies, who was graciously pleased to send his son into the world, by a man who sowed a grain of mustard-seed. Or, to alter the appropriation a little, we may say, that Christ represents himself, by the man who sowed the mustard-seed: His doctrine, which he preached by the mustard seed, appeared vain and infignificant to the Scribes and Parisees; the least of all seeds, the most despited in the eyes

of vain and foolish men who judge by the outward appearance of things, without being able to scan their inward qualities, or determine their real worth. And how many millions of stupid mortals are daily neglecting those glorious truths of the kingdom of God, and the gospel of everlasting consequence and value, and running greedily in pursuit of the false glare of things of a momentary consequence, and even building their happiness in acquisitions which ought and must be their shame.

4 He showeth the future superiority of the gospel over all other religion, by the mustard seed, which, after

it is grown, is the greatest among herbs

And lastly, that rest which mankind shall finally obtain in the many mansions of divide grace, is signified by sowls lodging in the branches of this chiefest among herbs.

Verse 33.

"Another parable spake he unto them, The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three me sures of meal, till the whole was leavened."

By this parable we learn, It. The divine efficacy of the gospel on the creature who stands in need of its salvation, by the power of leaven operating in meal.

- 2. We are taught that all momentous truth and fublime doctrinal idea of the real nature of man, which absolutely stands in relation to Christ, or his gospel, as meal does to leaven: for, it may be observed, that leaven could have no possible operation in meal, did not the meal, in its own nature, possess a quality that naturally adhered to the leaven.
- 3 The final effects of divine grace in the ministry of reconciliation, in which we look for universal submission to Christ in his glorious and ever blessed kingdom, is communicated in that it is said, " until the whole was leavened,"

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Verse 44.

Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: the which when a man hath found he hideth. and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field"

Christ here repefents,

I. Human nature, by a treasurer,

2 Mortality and time, by a field, in which the treasure was hid.

3. Himself by the one who found the treasure, and

for joy hid it.

His parting with the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and vefting himfelf, thro' his mediatorial process, with all power in heaven and earth, by which mortality and time became manifestly his own, and by which his right of property in the whole creature which was made subject to vanity was manifested, is represented by a man's selling all that he had and buying the field which contained the treasure.

Verses 45, 46.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman feeling goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and fold all that he had, and bought it?

The ideas communicated in this Parable are almost

fimilar to those in the preceding.

1. Human nature is here represented by a pearl of great price.

2. The Saviour represents himself by a merchant-

man feeking goodly pearls.

3. The success of his mission in seeking and saving that which was lost, is shown in that the merchant-man found a pearl of great price and making it his own by purchase; for which purpose, he sold all that he had, as described in the former parable. But let it be re-

membered, for the excitement of eternal gratitude, that this purchase was with great price.

Verfe 47:

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away."

It will be proper to this place to introduce fomething of a fimilar parable, which we find in chap. xxii. from the beginning to the 14th verse, inclusive, " And Jefus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and faid, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his fon; and fent forth his fervants to call them that were bidden to the wedding; and they would not come. Again he fe t forth other fervants, faying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my exen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready a come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise; and the remnant took his tervants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof he was wroth : and he fent forth his armies, and deftroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city. Then faith he to his fervants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the high-ways, and as many as ye shall find bid to the marriage. So those fervants went out into the highways, and gathered togetha er all, as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to fee the guefts, he faw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; & he faith unto him, Friend, how comest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then

faid the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but sew are chosen."

1. Christ in this parable represents the Father of all

mercies, by a king who made a marriage for his fon.

2. Himself, by a Prince, for whom his father made a wedding.

3. The then present opportunity of receiving Christ & his doctrine, while he was graciously preaching the word of the kingdom, and evidencing his authority by incontestible evidences of power and grace, is signified by a wedding.

4. The house of Israel, undoubtedly, is meant, by

those who were bidden.

5. The message brought to the Jews by Christ and those whom he ordained to preach to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, is represented by the call to those who were bidden.

6. The perfecution which they met with from the Jews, is shown in the treatment which the servants ex-

perienced.

7. The neglect of the Jews on this occasion, is fignified by those who were bidden making light of the invitation, one going to his farm, and another to his merchandise.

8. The destruction of the Jews by the Romans, is meant by the king's being wrathful, and sending forth his armies to destroy these murderers, and to burn up

their city; meaning Jerusalem.

We now come to that part of this Parable which corresponds with the one above written; the same thing being meant by the servants' being sent into the highways as is meant by a net's being cast into the sea.— And the reader will easily observe, that the same thing is meant, by gathering together all, as many as were for erin din to

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found, both bad and good, as is meant by the nets gathering of every kind. And the man who had not a wedding garment, in the parable of the marriage, answers to the bad in the parable of the net; and the binding of the man and casting him into utter darkness, answers to the casting of the bad fish away.

But let us look diligently, that we may find who were represented by bad fish, in one parable, and by a man

who had not a wedding garment, in the other.

1. By wedding garment, I understand the righteousness of Christ, of which I spoke in notes on chap ix 16.

2 The garment which was not accepted as a wedding garment, was the garment which we found in notes last referred to, which was prepared by putting a piece of new cloth to an old garment, whereby the rent in the

old garment was made worfe.

3. By coming to the wedding, in the one parable, and being caught in the net, in the other, fignify coming into the open profession of christianity. New behold the group! Here are many crying Lord! Lord! but not disposed in heart to do the will of the Father :-Here are multitudes who have been at the trouble of patching up a righteousnels, by depending on the righteoulnets of Christ in conjunction with their own: The fishers of men have caught of every kind, and now comes. the divition. Christians by profession, who know nothing of the all renovating power of divine grace, who call Jesus Lord, but depend on works of their own for acceptance with God, are in a worse situation than those who make no profession at all; and we may say to such, as Christ said to the Pharisees and Scribes, " Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven bef re you."

Being cast away, in one parable, and being cast into utter darkness, represented in the other, shows the despairing situation into which the hypocrite is reduced by

the perishing of his hope. But that the reader may have a scriptural knowledge of the consequence arising from a destruction of this false righteousness, he will be so careful as to turn to the 1st Epistle of Paul to the Coninthians iii. 11, &c. where we find, that those who suffered the loss of their own works, (which are represented by hay, wood and stubble) by fire, are saved by that same fire.

THE DESTRUCTION

OF

FERUSALEM.

WE are now come to the last act of this dismal tragedy, the destruction of Jerusalem and the final dissolution of the Jewish polity in church and state, which our Saviour for several reasons might not think fit to declare nakedly and plainly, and therefore chooseth to clothe his discourse in figurative language. "He might possibly do " it, as Dr. Jortin conceives, to perplex the " unbelieving persecuting Jews, if his dis-" courses should ever fall into their hands, "that they might not learn to avoid the im-" pending evil" " Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from berven, and the powers of the heaven shall be shaken."

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Commentators generally understand this and what follows of the end of the world and of Christ's coming to judgment : but the words immediately after the tribulation of those days show evidently that he is not speaking of any distant event, but of something immediately consequent upon the tribulation before mentioned, and that must be the destruction of Jerusalem. It is true, his figures are very strong, but no stronger than are used by the ancient prophets upon similar occasions. The prophet Isaiah speaketh in the same manner of Babylon, "Behold the day of the Lord cometh. cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and be shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause ber light to shine." The prophet Ezekiel speak. eth in the same manner of Egypt, " And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall notgive her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God."-The prophet Daniel speaketh in the same manner of the slaughter of the Jews by the

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little horn, whether by the little horn be understood Antiochus Epiphanes or the power of the Romans; " And it waxed great, even to the bost of beaven; and it cast down some of the host, and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them: And the prophet Joel of this very destruction of Jerusalem, " And I will show wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. Thus it is that in the prophetic language great commotions and revolutions upon earth, are often represented by commotions and changes in the heavens.

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Our Saviour proceedeth in the same figurative style. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory." The plain meaning of it is, that the destruction of Jerusalem will be such a remarkable instance of divine vengeance, such a signal manifestation of Christ's power and glory, that all the Jewish tribes shall mourn, and many will be led from thence to acknowledge Christ and the Christian religion. In the ancient prophets God is frequently

described as coming in the clouds, upon any remarkable interposition and manifestation of his power: and the same description is here applied to Christ. The destruction of Jerusalem will be as ample a manifestation of Christ's power and glory, as if he was himself to come visibly in the clouds of heaven.

The same sort of metaphor is carried on in the next verse. " And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of beaven to the other." That is all in the style and phraseology of the prophets, and stript of its figures meaneth only, that after the destruction of Jerusalem Christ by his ang ls or ministers will gather to himself a glorious church out of all the nations under heaven. The Jews shall be thrust out, as he expresses himself in another place, " and they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south; and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. No one ever so little versed in history needeth to be told, that the Christian religion spread & prevailed mightily after this period; and hardly any one thing contributed more to this success of the gospel, than the destruction of Jerusalem, falling out in the very

manner and with the very circumstances so particularly feretold by our blessed Saviour.

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We here present the reader with two extracts of letters written by Andrew Dudith, of Poland, who had been excommunicated from the Church of Rome for herefy. His sentiments savoured the Unitarian Baptists, a species of popular heretics who had sled into Poland for the enjoyment of that religious liberty which was denied them in other places. Dudith corresponded with many of the most noted reformers; and these extracts clearly discover the spirit by which they were actuated, and may serve to show the light in which that discerning man viewed the conduct of these persecuting Protestants.

" Tell me, (says he to Wolff) my learned friend, now 4 that the Calvinists have burnt Servetus, and beheaded " Gentilis, and murdered many others, having banished Bernard Ochin with his wife and children from your city in the depth of a sharp winter; now that the Luther ns have expelled Lasco, with the congregation of foreigners that came out of England with him, in an extremely rigorous feason of the year; having " done a great many fuch exploits, all contrary to the e genius of christianity, how, I ask, how shall we meet the Papists? With what face can we tax them with cruelty ? How dare we fay, Our weapens are not carnal? "How can we any longer urge, Let both grow together e till the harvest? Let us cease to boaft, that faith can-" not be compelled, & that conscience ought to be free." "You contend, (fays he to Baza.) that scripture is a perfect rule of faith and practice. But you are all s divided about the fense of scripture; and you have not fettied who shall be judge. You say one thing, Stancarus another. You quote scripture, he quotes 4 scripture. You reason, he reasons. You require me

to believe you. I respect you : but why should I 6 trust you rather than Stancarus? You say he is a here-· tic : but the Papists say, you are both heretics. Shall I believe them ? They quote historians and fathers : fo do you. To whom do you address yourselves? Where is the judge? You fay, the spirit, of the prophets are fubject to the prophets : but you fay I am no prophet, and I say, you are not one. Who is to be judge? I love liberty as well as you. You have broken off your yoke, allow me to break mine. Hoving freed yours felves from the tyranny of popish prelates, why do you turn ecclefiaftical tyrants yourselves, and treat others with barbarity and cruelty for only doing what you fet them an example to do? You contend, that your lay-hearers, the magistrates, and not you, are to be blamed, for it is they who banish and burn for herefy. « I know you make this excuse : but tell me, have not you instilled such principles into their ears? Have they done any thing more than put in practice the doctrine that you taught them? Have you not told them how glorious it was to defend the faith? Have you ont been the constant panegyrists of fuch princes as have depopulated whole diffricts for herefy? Do you onot daily teach, that they who appeal from your con-· fessions to scripture ought to be punished by the secular power? It is impossible for you to deny this. Does not all the world know that you are a fet of demagogues, or (to speak more mildly) a fort of tribunes, and that the magistrates do nothing but exhibit in public what you teach them in private? You try to ' justify the banishment of Ochin, and the execution of others, and you feem to wish Poland would follow 'your example. God forbid! When you talk of your Augeburg Confession, and your Helvetic Creed, and your unanimity, and your fundamental truths, I keep thinking of the fixth commandment. Thou shalt not kill."

Honor and riches are the two wheels upon which the whole world is moved; these are the two springs of our discontent.

Pride in a woman, destroys all symmetry and grace; and affectation is a more terrible enemy to a fine face than the small-pox.

Flatterers only lift a man up, as it is said the eagle does the tortoise, to get something

by his fall.

He who receives a good turn should never er forget it; he who does one should never remember it

Defile not your mouth with swearing; neither use yourself to the naming of the Holy One.

A man cannot be truly happy here, without a well grounded hope of being happy hereafter.

A contented mind is more worth than all the treasure of both the Indies: And he that is master of himself in an innocent and homely retreat, enjoys all the wealth and curiosities of the universe.

Entertain charity, and seek peace with all men; be helpful to your friends, and kind to strangers, but love and do good even to your enemies, for otherwise you usurp, not deserve, the name of a Christian.

Hearken to the warnings of conscience if you would not feel its wounds.

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THE HOUR GLASS

Is an emblem of human life; behold! how swiftly the sands run, and how rapidly our lives are drawing to a close. We cannot without astonishment behold the little particles which are contained in this machine, how they pass away almost imperceptibly, and yet, to our surprise, in the short space of an hour, they are all exhausted.—Thus wastes man! to day, he puts forth the tender leaves of hope; to morrow, blossoms, and bears his blushing honors thick upon him; the next day comes a frost, which nips the tender shoot, and when he thinks his greatness is still aspiring, he falls like autumn leaves, to enrich our mother earth.

EVENING REFLECTIONS.

THE sun is set, the day is clos'd,
The night is come the world's compos'd,
And cares are laid aside:
So fly my days without control,
Like rolling spheres around the poll,
Or swift as meteors glide.

My life at best is but a span;
The days are few laid up for man,
To number here in pain:
Each moment clips the little space,

Contracts the span, cuts short the race, And winds the mortal chain.

Soon will the wheel to pieces break,
The fountain dry, the fabric shake,
The silver cord untie:
My day will end, my night will come,
My body lodg'd in yonder tomb,
My soul above the sky.

Well, if my day must end so soon,
The morning sun go down at noon,
The present I'll improve:
I'll watch the moments as they fly,
And none misspent shall me pass by,
While I have power to love.

I'll strive to make my calling sure,
To reach the mark, the prize secure,
And wait the crown in view:
I'll take the cross, the shame despise,
And seek my mansion in the skies,
And bid the world adieu!

Then break thou wheel, thou cord untie,
Thou fabric fall, thou fountain dry,
And night thy curtain spread;
Go down my sun, wind up my chain,
Contract my span, and end my pain,
And lodge me with the dead.

L. I.